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Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Item 7 of the provisional agenda*
Ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee

Ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee

Report of the secretariat

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* CEDAW/C/2004/I/1.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report provides information on developments in the United Nations human rights regime, including information concerning other treaty bodies and the Subcommission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (chapter II). Chapter III contains a summary of the requests received by the Division for the Advancement of Women, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, for information related to, and action by, the Committee as well as other matters, while chapter IV presents information on the reports to be considered by the Committee at future sessions. Chapter V contains information on the efforts of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women to encourage universal ratification of the Convention, ratification of its Optional Protocol, acceptance of the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention and implementation of the Convention.

2. A list of States parties that have signed, ratified or acceded to the Optional Protocol is contained in annex I, and a list of States parties that have accepted the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, is contained in annex II. A list of States that have not yet ratified or acceded to the Convention is contained in annex III. The status of submission of reports by States parties under article 18 of the Convention is the subject of a separate report of the Secretary-General (CEDAW/C/2004/I/2).

3. At its twenty-ninth session, the Committee requested the secretariat to prepare a synopsis of the Committee's working methods in relation to the recommendations of the fifteenth chairpersons' meeting in order to facilitate further discussion, as well as to facilitate reporting by the Committee's Chairperson to the sixteenth meeting of the chairpersons in 2004.[1] In response to this request, the secretariat has prepared a comprehensive note on the current working methods of the Committee (see CEDAW/C/2004/I/4/Add.1) which is similar to the notes on the working methods of other treaty bodies included periodically in the annual reports of those bodies. **The Committee may wish to decide to include the note contained in CEDAW/C/2004/I/4/Add.1 in its annual report so as to make its working methods more widely known to States parties and others interested in its work.** At the twenty-ninth session, the Committee also requested the secretariat to prepare a note, for discussion at the thirtieth session, on the implications and possible modalities of the consideration of reports of States parties in two parallel working groups or chambers.[2] In response to that request and in order to assist the Committee in its consideration of this issue, the secretariat has prepared the note set out in CEDAW/C/2004/I/4/Add.2.

II. Developments in the human rights regime

A. Human rights treaty bodies

4. At its seventy-eighth session, held from 14 July to 8 August 2003, the Human Rights Committee continued its discussion of a draft general comment concerning article 2 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.[3,4] At its thirtieth session, held from 5 to 23 May 2003, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights held discussions on a draft general comment on article 3 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (pertaining to the

equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all economic, social and cultural rights set forth in the Covenant). At the same session, the Committee decided to set aside two days during its thirty-first session for specific topics: the date of 21 November 2003 was set aside for the continuation of the discussions on the draft general comment on article 3 of the Covenant; and the date of 24 November 2003 was set aside for general discussion on the right to work (article 6 of the Covenant).

5. At its thirty-third session, held from 19 May to 6 June 2003, the Committee on the Rights of the Child adopted its fourth general comment, on adolescent health and development in the context of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. At its thirty-fourth session, held from 15 September to 3 October 2003, the Committee adopted a recommendation in which it agreed on the principle of meeting in two chambers in the future, with due consideration being given to equitable geographical distribution. It requested the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session to approve and provide appropriate financial support to the Committee to work in two chambers as of October 2004 for an initial period of two years. At the thirty-fourth session, the Committee also adopted its fifth general comment, on general measures of implementation for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and held its annual day of discussion on 19 September 2003, which focused on the rights of indigenous children.

6. At its thirtieth session, held from 28 April to 16 May 2003, the Committee against Torture initiated the drafting of a general comment on article 2 of the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.[5,6] For the first time, the Committee considered a report in the absence of a delegation, except for a member of the Permanent Mission who took notes. The Committee adopted provisional conclusions and recommendations on that report and requested the State party to provide written responses to its questions and comments and the issues raised in the provisional conclusions and recommendations, which the Committee intends to adopt at its thirty-first session, to be held from 10 to 21 November 2003. Within the context of its new procedure for follow-up to its conclusions and recommendations, the Committee requested a State party to submit information on the implementation of specific recommendations before the submission of its next periodic report.

7. At its sixty-third session, held from 4 to 22 August 2003, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination adopted conclusions on the situation in two States parties under its review procedure, pursuant to which the Committee considers the situation in States parties whose initial or periodic reports are considerably overdue.[7] Through its observations and recommendations with respect to States parties in such a situation, the Committee draws the attention of the State party concerned to the consequences of such non-compliance and reminds it of its reporting obligations under article 9 of the Convention. It furthermore makes recommendations to the State party with a view to ensuring the implementation of the Convention. The Committee also adopted two decisions relating to the situation in two States parties under its early warning and urgent action procedure. In its annual report to the General Assembly, the Committee includes a special chapter on such cases for the Assembly to take what action it deems appropriate. At the same session, the Committee completed the review of its methods of work initiated at its sixtieth session and adopted a working paper.[8]

B. Subcommission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights[9]

8. The Subcommission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, at its fifty-fifth session held from 28 July to 15 August 2003, adopted a number of resolutions and decisions relevant to the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, including resolution 2003/28, on harmful traditional practices affecting the health of women and the girl child; resolution 2003/26, on systematic rape, sexual slavery and slavery-like practices; and resolution 2003/3, on the report of the Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery.

9. The Subcommission decided to entrust Ms. Florizelle O'Connor with the preparation of a working paper on women in prison, including issues relating to the children of women in prison, for submission to the Subcommission at its fifty-sixth session (see decision 2003/104 on women in prison). By way of follow-up to the final report on systematic rape, sexual slavery and slavery-like practices during armed conflict (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1998/13), the Subcommission decided to request Ms. Françoise Hampson to submit to the Subcommission at its fifty-sixth session a working paper on the criminalization, investigation and prosecution of acts of serious sexual violence occurring in the context of an armed conflict or committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population (see decision 2003/108 on a working paper on the criminalization, investigation and prosecution of acts of serious sexual violence). In its decision 2003/114 on reservations to human rights treaties, the Subcommission decided to request Ms. Françoise Hampson to update her expanded working paper on this topic and to submit a final working paper to the Subcommission at its fifty-sixth session, with a view to transmitting it to the treaty bodies and the International Law Commission. In its resolution 2003/12 on a study on non-discrimination as enshrined in article 2, paragraph 2, of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Subcommission requested Mr. Emmanuel Decaux to prepare a working paper on non-discrimination as enshrined in article 2, paragraph 2, of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,[10] taking into account other relevant studies of the Subcommission, in order to enable it to take a decision at its fifty-sixth session on the feasibility of a study on that subject.

III. Requests for information or action and other matters

10. The Division for the Advancement of Women received various requests for information related to, or action by, the Committee. The Division has responded to these requests in the manner described below. The Committee may wish to respond further to some of those requests.

11. In a letter addressed to the Chairperson of the Committee, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) requested information on measures adopted by treaty bodies to implement the recommendations addressed to them in the study on human rights and disability: the current use and future potential of United Nations human rights instruments in the context of disability, which was presented at the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on Human Rights, in 2002. The study will be available to members of the Committee at its thirtieth session. In

response to that request, the Division for the Advancement of Women provided OHCHR with excerpts concerning disability-related issues from the lists of issues and questions and concluding comments emanating from the twenty-sixth to twenty-ninth sessions of the Committee.

12. The OHCHR requested the secretariat to inform the Committee of the following recommendation of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action so that the Committee could take appropriate action: recommendation 19 (b) made during the first session of the Working Group, held in Geneva from 21 to 31 January 2003, invited treaty bodies "to consider providing the Working Group with information on how they are using the respective conventions in order to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in their respective fields of competence". In response to that request, the Division informed OHCHR that the recommendation of the Working Group would be brought to the attention of the Committee at its thirtieth session, in January 2004. The Division further indicated that, in its concluding comments, the Committee routinely refers to the outcome of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, requesting States parties to include information on the implementation of aspects of those documents relating to relevant articles of the Convention in subsequent reports (a sample paragraph from recent concluding comments was included).

13. In a letter addressed to the former Chairperson of the Committee, the Chairperson of the International Law Commission and Special Rapporteur on reservations to treaties referred to the Preliminary Conclusions on Reservations to Normative Multilateral Treaties, including Human Rights Treaties, adopted by the International Law Commission in 1997[11] and indicated that the Commission intended to resume its consideration of the topic and adopt final conclusions, probably during its fifty-fifth or fifty-sixth session, in 2003 or 2004. In that connection, the Chairperson of the International Law Commission and Special Rapporteur proposed an exchange of views and one or more joint meetings between the bodies concerned, including the treaty bodies, and the Commission. They also indicated that the Commission was open to any suggestions the Chairperson of the Committee might wish to make on the topic covered by the Preliminary Conclusions. In response to that request, the Division for the Advancement of Women provided information to the Chairperson of the Commission and Special Rapporteur on the work of the Committee in relation to reservations.

14. OHCHR requested information with regard to forthcoming sessions of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In response to those requests and in accordance with past practice and the continuing cooperation among treaty bodies, the Division provided OHCHR with copies of the concluding comments, or references thereto, of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women concerning the States parties whose reports those treaty bodies would be considering.

15. At its twenty-ninth session, the Committee discussed the possibility of holding an informal meeting of the members of the Committee in Maastricht, the Netherlands, in the spring of 2004 to discuss working methods. Members of the Committee had indicated that the meeting should avoid conflicting with the forty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women and the consideration by

the Commission on Human Rights of its agenda item on women at its sixtieth session. On the basis of the available information regarding the forty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women and the sixtieth session of the Commission on Human Rights, the Division would suggest that the meeting of the Committee in Maastricht be held from 29 March to 1 April 2004.

16. In accordance with the Committee's request, the Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women sent a letter to the entities of the United Nations system, drawing their attention to the Committee's concern about the limited engagement of entities of the United Nations system in its work, and bringing to their attention the Committee's guidelines to enhance cooperation with specialized agencies.[12] In addition, and in accordance with past practice, the Director sent letters to the specialized agencies, and to certain funds, programmes and offices of the United Nations, the human rights treaty bodies and special mechanisms of the Commission on Human Rights inviting them to submit information with regard to those States parties whose reports would be considered at the thirtieth session of the Committee. The letter also drew attention to the closed meeting of the Committee with representatives of United Nations bodies on those States parties whose reports would be before the Committee. Furthermore, the letter drew attention to the meeting of the pre-session working group for the thirty-first session, and the closed meeting with entities of the United Nations to be held at that time.

IV. Reports to be considered by the Committee at future sessions

17. At its twenty-ninth session, the Committee drew up the list of States parties whose reports would be considered at future sessions. All those States parties nominated by the Committee for consideration of their reports at its thirtieth session will be able to present their reports at that session. The Committee proposed the following list of reports to be considered at its thirty-first session: the combined initial, second and third periodic report of Angola; the follow up report of Argentina; the fifth periodic report of Bangladesh; the fifth periodic report of the Dominican Republic; the combined second and third periodic report of Equatorial Guinea; the combined initial, second and third periodic reports of Latvia and Malta; and the fifth periodic report of Spain. Except for Equatorial Guinea, States parties invited to present periodic reports at the thirty-first session have confirmed that they will be able to present their reports at that session. Equatorial Guinea has been contacted in writing and by telephone but efforts to confirm attendance by its representatives have not been successful. Consequently, the secretariat has contacted the State party selected by the Committee as back up to ascertain its availability to present its periodic report at the thirty-first session.

18. In finalizing the list of reports to be considered at the thirty-first session and proposing those to be considered at future sessions, the Committee's attention is drawn to the report of the Secretary-General on the status of submission of reports (CEDAW/C/2004/I/2) which contains a list of States parties whose reports have been submitted but not yet considered.

19. The Committee's reporting guidelines indicate that initial reports should not exceed 100 pages, while periodic reports should not exceed 70 pages. No indication is provided as to a suggested length of the replies of States parties to the list of

issues and questions prepared by the pre-session working group. **The Committee may wish to consider this matter with a view to providing States parties with guidance when preparing their replies.**

V. Efforts to encourage universal ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, ratification of the Optional Protocol, acceptance of the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention and implementation of the Convention

20. The Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women have continued their efforts to encourage universal ratification of the Convention, acceptance of the Optional Protocol and the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention, and the fulfilment of reporting obligations. The Special Adviser addressed those issues in her statement before the Third Committee during the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly and the Director of the Division provided information on technical assistance available through the Division to States parties. The Director also provided information on the technical assistance activities of the Division at the informal meeting of the Committee with States parties whose reports have been due for more than five years, in July 2003.

21. In September 2003, the Division convened a training workshop for States parties in the African region, with the Committee's former Chairperson serving as the main resource person. The workshop was preceded by a judicial colloquium on the domestic application of the Convention. Both events were held in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, in cooperation with the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania. Also in September 2003, in response to a request from the Minister for Women's Affairs for technical assistance to facilitate the implementation of the Convention in Afghanistan, the Division submitted a detailed proposal to the Minister setting out the modalities for such assistance. Preliminary discussions have also taken place with the Government of Sierra Leone concerning support with regard to implementation of and reporting under the Convention. In October 2003, the Division provided funding for a former member of the Committee to assist the Government of Mali in finalizing its combined second, third, fourth and fifth periodic report. The Division and the Committee's Chairperson participated in a training seminar on the Convention for parliamentarians in Geneva in October 2003, which was organized by the Division and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. The Division contributed funding for the meeting of the drafting group of the Committee, which met in Berlin from 17 to 19 October 2003 to finalize the draft general recommendation on article 4 (1). The Division and the Office of the Special Adviser participated in a meeting, co-hosted by the Government of Croatia and the United Nations Development Fund for Women, on the implementation of the Convention in central and eastern Europe (Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovenia) and held in Dubrovnik, Croatia on 25 and 26 October.

22. The Handbook for Parliamentarians on the Convention and the Optional Protocol, which the Division prepared together with the Inter-Parliamentary Union, was issued in July 2003 in English and presented at United Nations Headquarters during the Committee's twenty-ninth session. Translation of the Handbook into the other official languages of the United Nations is in progress. The Division facilitated the granting, by the United Nations Publications Board, of permission to translate the Handbook into Turkish, at the request of a non-governmental organization. The Division continued preparation of a comprehensive training package on the Convention and the Optional Protocol.

Notes

[1] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 38* (A/58/38), Part two, para. 449.

[2] See ibid., para. 452.

[3] See ibid., *Supplement No. 40* (A/58/40).

[4] Article 2 reads as follows:

"1. Each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes to respect and to ensure to all individuals within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction the rights recognized in the present Covenant, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

"2. Where not already provided for by existing legislative or other measures, each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes to take the necessary steps, in accordance with its constitutional processes and with the provisions of the present Covenant, to adopt such legislative or other measures as may be necessary to give effect to the rights recognized in the present Covenant.

"3. Each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes:

"(a) To ensure that any person whose rights or freedoms as herein recognized are violated shall have an effective remedy, notwithstanding that the violation has been committed by persons acting in an official capacity;

"(b) To ensure that any person claiming such a remedy shall have his right thereto determined by competent judicial, administrative or legislative authorities, or by any other competent authority provided for by the legal system of the State, and to develop the possibilities of judicial remedy;

"(c) To ensure that the competent authorities shall enforce such remedies when granted."

[5] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 44* (A/58/44), para. 13.

[6] Article 2 reads as follows:

"1. Each State Party shall take effective legislative, administrative, judicial or other measures to prevent acts of torture in any territory under its jurisdiction.

"2. No exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as a justification of torture.

"3. An order from a superior officer or a public authority may not be invoked as a justification of torture."

[7] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 18* (A/58/18).

[8] See ibid., annex IV.

[9] The present section is based on the draft report of the Subcommission on its fifty-fifth session (E/CN.4/Sub.2/2003/L.11 and Add.1). The final report was not yet available at the time of submission of the present report.

[10] Article 2, paragraph 2 reads as follows:

> "The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to guarantee that the rights enunciated in the present Covenant will be exercised without discrimination of any kind as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status."

[11] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 10* (A/52/10), para. 157.

[12] See ibid., *Fifty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 38* (A/58/38), part two, paras. 462 and 463.

Annex I

States parties that have signed, ratified or acceded to the Optional Protocol to the Convention

States parties	*Date signed*	*Date of ratification or accession*
1. Albania		23 June 2003[a]
2. Andorra	9 July 2001	14 October 2002
3. Argentina	28 February 2000	
4. Austria	10 December 1999	6 September 2000
5. Azerbaijan	6 June 2000	1 June 2001
6. Bangladesh	6 September 2000	6 September 2000
7. Belarus	29 April 2002	
8. Belgium	10 December 1999	
9. Belize		9 December 2002[a]
10. Benin	25 May 2000	
11. Bolivia	10 December 1999	27 September 2000
12. Bosnia and Herzegovina	7 September 2000	4 September 2002
13. Brazil	13 March 2001	28 June 2002
14. Bulgaria	6 June 2000	
15. Burkina Faso	16 November 2001	
16. Burundi	13 November 2001	
17. Cambodia	11 November 2001	
18. Canada		18 October 2002[a]
19. Chile	10 December 1999	
20. Colombia	10 December 1999	
21. Costa Rica	10 December 1999	20 September 2001
22. Croatia	5 June 2000	7 March 2001
23. Cuba	17 March 2000	
24. Cyprus	8 February 2001	26 April 2002
25. Czech Republic	10 December 1999	26 February 2001
26. Denmark	10 December 1999	31 May 2000
27. Dominican Republic	14 March 2000	10 August 2001
28. Ecuador	10 December 1999	5 February 2002
29. El Salvador	4 April 2001	

States parties	*Date signed*	*Date of ratification or accession*
30. Finland	10 December 1999	29 December 2000
31. France	10 December 1999	9 June 2000
32. Georgia		1 August 2002[a]
33. Germany	10 December 1999	15 January 2002
34. Ghana	24 February 2000	
35. Greece	10 December 1999	24 January 2002
36. Guatemala	7 September 2000	9 May 2002
37. Guinea-Bissau	12 September 2000	
38. Hungary		22 December 2000[a]
39. Iceland	10 December 1999	6 March 2001
40. Indonesia	28 February 2000	
41. Ireland	7 September 2000	7 September 2000
42. Italy	10 December 1999	22 September 2000
43. Kazakhstan	6 September 2000	24 August 2001
44. Kyrgyzstan		22 July 2002[a]
45. Lesotho	6 September 2000	
46. Liechtenstein	10 December 1999	24 October 2001
47. Lithuania	8 September 2000	
48. Luxembourg	10 December 1999	1 July 2003
49. Madagascar	7 September 2000	
50. Malawi	7 September 2000	
51. Mali		5 December 2000[a]
52. Mauritius	11 November 2001	
53. Mexico	10 December 1999	15 March 2002
54. Mongolia	7 September 2000	28 March 2002
55. Namibia	19 May 2000	26 May 2000
56. Nepal	18 December 2001	
57. Netherlands[b]	10 December 1999	22 May 2002
58. New Zealand[c]	7 September 2000	7 September 2000
59. Nigeria	8 September 2000	
60. Norway	10 December 1999	5 March 2002
61. Panama	9 June 2000	9 May 2001

States parties	*Date signed*	*Date of ratification or accession*
62. Paraguay	28 December 1999	14 May 2001
63. Peru	22 December 2000	9 April 2001
64. Philippines	21 March 2000	
65. Portugal	16 February 2000	26 April 2002
66. Romania	6 September 2000	25 August 2003
67. Russian Federation	8 May 2001	
68. Sao Tome and Principe	6 September 2000	
69. Senegal	10 December 1999	26 May 2000
70. Serbia and Montenegro		31 July 2003[a]
71. Seychelles	22 July 2002	
72. Sierra Leone	8 September 2000	
73. Slovakia	5 June 2000	17 November 2000
74. Slovenia	10 December 1999	
75. Solomon Islands		6 May 2002[a]
76. Spain	14 March 2000	6 July 2001
77. Sri Lanka		15 October 2002[a]
78. Sweden	10 December 1999	24 April 2003
79. Tajikistan	7 September 2000	
80. Thailand	14 June 2000	14 June 2000
81. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	3 April 2000	17 October 2003
82. Timor-Leste		16 April 2003[a]
83. Turkey	8 September 2000	29 October 2002
84. Ukraine	7 September 2000	26 September 2003
85. Uruguay	9 May 2000	26 July 2001
86. Venezuela	17 March 2000	13 May 2002

[a] Accession.

[b] For the Kingdom in Europe, the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba.

[c] With a declaration to the effect that "consistent with the constitutional status of Tokelau and taking into account its commitment to the development of self-government through an act of self-determination under the Charter of the United Nations, this ratification shall not extend to Tokelau unless and until a Declaration to this effect is lodged by the Government of New Zealand with the depositary on the basis of appropriate consultation with that territory".

Annex II

States parties that have deposited with the Secretary-General instruments of acceptance of the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

States parties	*Acceptance date*
Andorra	14 October 2002
Australia	4 June 1998
Austria	11 September 2000
Bahamas	17 January 2003
Brazil	5 March 1997
Canada	3 November 1997
Chile	8 May 1998
China	10 July 2002
Cyprus	30 July 2002
Denmark	12 March 1996
Egypt	2 August 2001
Finland	18 March 1996
France	8 August 1997
Germany	25 February 2002
Guatemala	3 June 1999
Iceland	8 May 2002
Italy	31 May 1996
Japan	12 June 2003
Jordan	11 January 2002
Lesotho	12 November 2001
Liechtenstein	15 April 1997
Luxembourg	1 July 2003
Madagascar	19 July 1996
Maldives	7 February 2002

States parties	*Acceptance date*
Mali	20 June 2002
Malta	5 March 1997
Mauritius	29 October 2002
Mexico	16 September 1996
Mongolia	19 December 1997
Netherlands[a]	10 December 1997
New Zealand	26 September 1996
Niger	1 May 2002
Norway	29 March 1996
Panama	5 November 1996
Portugal	8 January 2002
Republic of Korea	12 August 1996
Sweden	17 July 1996
Switzerland	2 December 1997
Turkey	9 December 1999
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland[b]	19 November 1997

[a] For the Kingdom in Europe, the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba.
[b] For the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Isle of Man, the British Virgin Islands and the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Annex III

States that have not ratified or acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women as at 1 November 2003

Africa

Somalia

Sudan

Swaziland

Asia and the Pacific

Brunei Darussalam

Iran (Islamic Republic of)

Kiribati

Marshall Islands

Micronesia (Federated States of)

Nauru

Oman

Palau

Qatar

Tonga

United Arab Emirates

Western European and other States

Holy See

Monaco

San Marino

United States of America

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
Thirtieth session
12-30 January 2004
Item 7 of the provisional agenda*
Ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee

Overview of the current working methods of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Note by the secretariat

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I. Introduction

1. Since its first session, in 1982, the Committee has made a concerted effort to develop appropriate working methods. These methods continue to evolve.

2. The present overview is designed to make the current working methods more transparent and readily accessible to States parties and others interested in the implementation of the Convention, including United Nations agencies, programmes and funds and civil society organizations.

II. Guidelines for reporting by States parties

3. The Committee has adopted reporting guidelines to assist States parties in the preparation of initial and subsequent periodic reports.[1] The Committee strongly encourages all States parties to submit reports in accordance with these guidelines. This will reduce the need for the Committee to request further information when it considers a report and will help the Committee to consider the situation regarding human rights in every State party on an equal basis. The Committee keeps these guidelines under review and updates them as appropriate.

4. Reports should be as concise as possible. Initial reports should be no more than 100 pages long and should deal specifically with every article of the Convention. Periodic reports should be no more than 70 pages long and generally should focus on the period between the consideration of the previous report and the current report, using the concluding comments on the previous report as their starting point and highlighting new developments. Where a State party has prepared a core document,[2] this will be available to the Committee.

5. The Committee recommends that States parties consult national non-governmental organizations in the preparation of their reports. It requests that reports of States parties describe the situation of non-governmental organizations and women's associations and their participation in the implementation of the Convention and the preparation of the report.

III. Consideration of reports of States parties by the Committee

6. The Committee usually invites eight States parties to present their reports at each session, taking into account the criteria of preference to be given to those States parties whose reports have been pending for the longest time, the need to give priority to initial reports and the desirability of a balance of reports in terms of geographic and other factors. The Committee usually selects the reports two sessions in advance of consideration and considers a mix of initial and periodic reports at each session.

A. Pre-session working group

7. A pre-session working group of the Committee, with the support of the secretariat, draws up short lists of issues and questions with regard to periodic reports which the Committee will consider at its next session, focusing on major areas of concern in regard to implementation of the Convention by the States parties

concerned. The lists of issues and questions are intended to facilitate the preparations by States parties for constructive dialogues with the Committee, to provide a focus for the dialogue with representatives of the reporting States and to improve the efficiency of the reporting system.

8. In order to provide the States parties with the lists of issues and questions well in advance, the pre-session working group meets for five days (in closed meetings) after the session prior to the one at which the periodic reports will be considered. The working group is normally composed of five members of the Committee, taking account of the desirability of a balanced geographical distribution and other relevant factors.

9. Representatives of the specialized agencies and bodies of the United Nations, as well as national and international non-governmental organizations, are invited to provide country-specific information to the pre-session working group on those States parties whose reports are before the group.

10. The lists of issues and questions are promptly sent to the States parties concerned, usually within a week after the pre-session working group concludes its work. States parties are invited to provide their responses within six weeks thereafter. The lists of issues and questions, together with the responses from States parties, are circulated to members of the Committee prior to the session at which the reports are to be examined.

B. Constructive dialogue

11. The Committee intends its consideration of a report to take the form of a constructive dialogue with representatives of the reporting State, the aim of this dialogue is to improve the situation pertaining to Convention rights in that State. Therefore, not only are representatives of the reporting States entitled to be present, but indeed their presence and participation are necessary at the meetings of the Committee when their countries' reports are examined.

12. In general, the Committee devotes up to three open meetings (of three hours each) to its consideration of initial reports. Representatives of the State party are invited to make introductory comments for a maximum of 45 minutes. This introduction is followed by one or two meetings in which experts pose questions in respect of the individual articles of the Convention. Experts seek to avoid duplicating questions and intervening under each article. Several days later, at the third meeting, the State party presents its replies — in writing and orally — to those questions.

13. Representatives of States parties presenting periodic reports are invited to make introductory comments for a maximum of 30 minutes. In the consideration of periodic reports, questions by experts are then clustered in accordance with the four substantive parts of the Convention, namely part I: articles 1 to 6; part II: articles 7 to 9; part III: articles 10 to 14; and part IV: articles 15 to 16. After several experts pose questions under a cluster, the State party is given an opportunity to respond; the next round of questions and answers follows until all clusters have been covered. Experts seek to avoid duplicating questions and intervening under each cluster and also seek to focus on issues identified by the pre-session working group. In general, the Committee devotes two open meetings to its consideration of periodic reports.

14. Interventions by experts during the constructive dialogue are limited to three to five minutes. The time limit is monitored by a speech timer but is enforced flexibly. While the Committee does not yet have a formal follow-up procedure for its concluding comments, it routinely asks States parties about the steps taken to follow up on the concluding comments adopted following consideration of the State party's previous report.

15. The Committee does not, at this stage, consider a report in the absence of representatives of a State party. Neither does the Committee consider the implementation of the Convention in a State party in the absence of a report.

16. Individual members of the Committee refrain from participating in any aspect of the consideration of the reports of the States of which they are nationals in order to maintain the highest standards of impartiality, both in substance and appearance.

C. Concluding comments

17. The Committee adopts concluding comments on the reports of States parties that it considers. For this purpose, the Committee holds a closed meeting after the constructive dialogue with each State party to consider the main issues to be reflected in the concluding comments for that State. The member of the Committee designated as the country rapporteur for the report(s) of that State party then prepares, for the consideration of the Committee, a draft of the concluding comments, with the general rapporteur of the Committee and with the support of the secretariat. The Committee discusses the draft concluding comments in closed meetings.

18. Concluding comments usually follow a standard format under the headings referred to below. The "introduction" usually indicates whether the report complied with the Committee's reporting guidelines; refers to any reservations to the Convention entered by the State party; notes the level of the delegation and the quality of the dialogue; and indicates whether the report mentions implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and/or the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. A section on "positive aspects" is generally organized in accordance with the order of the articles of the Convention. A section on "factors and difficulties affecting the implementation of the Convention" is included only in the most exceptional circumstances. The last section of the concluding comments, on "principal areas of concern and recommendations", is presented in the order of importance of the particular issues to the country under review and provides concrete proposals from the Committee on the concerns identified.

19. All concluding comments include a recommendation relating to dissemination, requesting the wide dissemination of the concluding comments in the State party concerned, and also a paragraph requesting that information be included in the State party's next periodic report on the implementation of aspects of outcomes of United Nations conferences, summits and special sessions of review. The concluding comments also set out the date when the State party's next periodic report is due.

20. The Committee's concluding comments are preceded by a summary of the State party's introductory statement to the Committee. This factual summary is prepared by the secretariat.

21. Each concluding comment is internally balanced, and the Committee strives to achieve consistency and balance, particularly in terms of praise and expressions of concern, among the concluding comments elaborated at each session.

22. The concluding comments are transmitted to the State party concerned promptly after the close of the session. They are then made available to all interested parties and included in the Committee's annual report to the General Assembly. They are also made available on the web site of the Division for the Advancement of Women.

IV. Strategies to encourage reporting by States parties

23. The Committee has adopted a number of measures to address the challenges posed to the treaty monitoring process by the significant number of outstanding and overdue reports. On an exceptional basis and as a temporary measure in order to encourage States parties to fulfil their reporting obligations under article 18 of the Convention as well as to address the backlog of reports awaiting consideration, States parties are invited to combine all their outstanding reporting obligations into a single document. The Committee's Chairperson of the Committee also sends reporting reminders to States parties whose initial reports are more than five years overdue. United Nations and other entities are encouraged to provide technical assistance in order to support States parties, at their request, in the implementation of their reporting obligations under the Convention. The Committee keeps these measures under review and modifies them as appropriate.

V. Interaction with specialized agencies and bodies of the United Nations

24. Since its second session, the Committee has invited specialized agencies of the United Nations to cooperate in its work. The Committee and pre-session working group invite specialized agencies and other bodies of the United Nations to provide reports containing country-specific information on States parties whose reports are before them. Representatives of these entities are invited to address the Committee in a closed meeting at the beginning of each of its sessions. They are also invited to address the pre-session working group. The Committee finds it most beneficial to be given written reports, the contents of which are highlighted by the representatives of the United Nations specialized agency or body concerned during the closed meetings with the Committee or working group. The Committee has adopted guidelines for the reports of United Nations and specialized agencies and bodies in order to enhance its cooperation with them.[3]

25. The Committee designates one of its members to serve as a focal point with particular United Nations entities. The Committee recommends that specialized agencies and other United Nations entities with field representation work with non-governmental organizations to disseminate information on the Convention and on the work of the Committee. The Committee continues to explore cooperation in relation to field-level activities and to develop further ways of integrating the Convention into the work of the United Nations system.

VI. Participation of non-governmental organizations in the activities of the Committee

26. Since its early sessions, the Committee has invited non-governmental organizations to follow its work. In order to ensure that it is as well informed as possible, the Committee invites representatives of national and international non-governmental organizations to provide country-specific information on States parties whose reports are before it. National and international non-governmental organizations are also invited to provide country-specific information to the pre-session working group on those States parties whose reports are before the group. Such information may be submitted in writing at any time, preferably in advance of the relevant session or working group. In addition, the Committee sets aside time at each of its sessions, usually at the beginning of the first and second week of the session, to enable representatives of non-governmental organizations to provide oral information. The pre-session working group also provides an opportunity for non-governmental organizations to provide oral information. The Committee encourages international non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies, funds and programmes to facilitate attendance at Committee sessions by representatives of national non-governmental organizations.

VII. General recommendations

27. Article 21 of the Convention provides that the Committee may make suggestions and general recommendations based on the examination of reports and information received from States parties. General recommendations are normally directed at States parties and usually elaborate the Committee's view of the content of the obligations assumed by States as party to the Convention.[4] The Committee elaborates general recommendations on articles or themes/issues of the Convention. Most of these outline matters which the Committee wishes to see addressed in the reports of States parties, and seek to provide detailed guidance to States parties on their obligations under the Convention and the steps that are required for compliance.

28. As at 30 September 2003, the Committee has adopted 24 general recommendations.[5] Those adopted during the Committee's first 10 years were short, addressing such issues as the content of reports, reservations to the Convention and resources for the Committee. At its tenth session, in 1991, the Committee decided to adopt the practice of issuing general recommendations on specific provisions of the Convention and on the relationship between the Convention articles and themes/issues. Following that decision, the Committee issued more detailed and comprehensive general recommendations which offer States parties clear guidance on the application of the Convention in particular situations. Comprehensive general recommendations have been adopted on violence against women (No. 19), equality in marriage and family relations (No. 21), women in public life (No. 23) and access to health care (No. 24).

29. In 1997, the Committee adopted a three-stage process for the formulation of general recommendations. The first stage consists of an open dialogue between the Committee, NGOs and others on the topic of the general recommendation. Specialized agencies and other United Nations bodies as well as NGOs are

encouraged to participate in this discussion and to submit informal background papers. A Committee member is then asked to draft the general recommendation, which is discussed at the next or a subsequent session of the Committee. Resource persons may be invited to participate in the discussion. At a following session, the revised draft is adopted by the Committee.

VIII. Statements adopted by the Committee

30. With a view to assisting States parties to the Convention, the Committee adopts statements to clarify and confirm its position with respect to major international developments and issues that bear upon the implementation of the Convention. These statements have dealt with issues such as reservations, gender and racial discrimination, solidarity with Afghan women, gender and sustainable development, and discrimination against older women.

IX. Optional Protocol to the Convention

31. Since the Optional Protocol to the Convention entered into force on 10 December 2000, the Committee allocates time at each session to consider issues arising thereunder. The Committee has appointed a five-member Working Group on Communications under the Optional Protocol. The Working Group has prepared a model form for submission of a communication.[6] It has registered the first communication and also taken a number of decisions with regard to its methods of work.

X. Other matters

32. The Committee continues to interact and coordinate activities with other human rights treaty bodies and mechanisms. It seeks the comments of other treaty bodies on its draft general recommendations and provides comments on their draft general recommendations/comments when invited to do so. Members of the Committee participate in relevant general discussion days held by other treaty bodies. The Committee holds discussions and exchanges views with other human rights mechanisms, including the special rapporteurs of the Commission on Human Rights on adequate housing, and violence against women, its causes and consequences.

33. The Chairperson of the Committee participates, on behalf of the Committee, in a number of meetings, including the annual sessions of the General Assembly, the Commission on Human Rights and the Commission on the Status of Women as well as meetings of persons chairing human rights treaty bodies. The Chairperson and other members of the Committee also participate in the inter-committee meetings of treaty bodies.

34. In addition to the two annual sessions, in January and July, at United Nations Headquarters, informal meetings of the members of the Committee, funded through extrabudgetary resources, are held from time to time. During such meetings, Committee members have mainly focused on enhancing the working methods of the Committee, including revision of reporting guidelines, and preparation of the

Committee's rules of procedure under the Optional Protocol. To date, three such meetings have been convened.

35. As part of the many efforts to encourage and support implementation of the Convention, members of the Committee participate in technical assistance activities, at the request of States, organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women, by the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and by regional United Nations bodies. These activities essentially focus on ratification of the Convention and the Optional Protocol, reporting under the Convention and on follow-up to the Committee's concluding comments.

Notes

[1] The Committee adopted revised reporting guidelines at its twenty-seventh session, in June 2002, which are effective for all reports submitted after 31 December 2002 and replace all earlier guidelines, which were first issued in 1983 and 1988 and revised in 1995 and 1996. For the text of the revised reporting guidelines, see *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 38* (A/57/38), part II, annex. They are also available on the Division's web site at http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/reporting.htm.

[2] For the guidelines for the core document, see HRI/GEN/2/Rev.1 and Add.1 and 2.

[3] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 38* (A/56/38), part two, paras. 392 to 395.

[4] Suggestions are usually addressed to United Nations entities.

[5] The texts of the general recommendations are available on the web site of the Division for the Advancement of Women at http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations.htm.

[6] The form is available on the web site of the Division for the Advancement of Women, at http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/protocol/crpl-communic.pdf, as well as in the report of the Committee on its twenty-sixth session (see *Official Records of the General Assembly, fifty-seventh session, Supplement No. 38* (A/57/38), part one, para. 407).

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Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Item 7 of the provisional agenda*
Ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee

Enhancing the working methods of the Committee under article 18 of the Convention

Parallel working groups for the consideration of periodic reports

Note by the secretariat

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I. Introduction

1. Over the past several months, the secretariat has received a significant number of reports of States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women for consideration by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. This increase reflects the serious attention States parties give to the treaty obligation, but it may also be due to the Committee's efforts at encouraging States parties to report in a timely manner, the provision of technical assistance by the Committee's secretariat and other entities of the United Nations system, as well as the favourable view of the States parties of the usefulness of reporting and the constructive dialogue with the Committee. As of 30 September 2003, the initial reports of 10 States parties and the periodic reports of 19 States parties awaited consideration by the Committee, eight of which (two initial and six periodic reports) will be taken up by the Committee at its thirtieth session, to be held from 12 to 30 January 2004. Reports are expected to be submitted at a steady pace in the months ahead. Thus, the Committee will be gradually accumulating a backlog of reports awaiting consideration.

2. In addition to its responsibilities under article 18 of the Convention, the Committee regularly makes contributions to United Nations events by highlighting the situation of women and responds to developments that impact on the implementation of the Convention. The Committee also participates in the work of the human rights treaty body system. Since the entry into force of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on 10 December 2000, the Committee also devotes time during its sessions to discuss matters related to the Optional Protocol with regard to its communication and inquiry procedures.

3. In the light of the increase in the work of the Committee, especially with regard to the backlog in the consideration of reports, the Committee held an exceptional session in August 2002 with the approval of the General Assembly. The holding of exceptional sessions, however, places great demands on members' time and may not, in the long run, be the best way for the Committee to discharge all its mandated responsibilities in the most effective and efficient manner. Other options should therefore be envisaged to ensure that the Committee can make optimal use of its time during its two regular sessions. The goal of any improvement in working methods should be to increase the number of reports considered at each session so as to create an incentive for timely reporting, while also allocating sufficient time at each session for discharging the Committee's other tasks, including those under the Optional Protocol.

4. Currently, the Committee meets twice a year, in January and July, for a total of six weeks (three weeks per session). On average, it considers 16 reports of States parties per year, or 8 reports per session (on average four initial and twelve periodic reports). In general, the 30 meetings of each session (of which two meetings are frequently lost to a holiday) are used as follows:

(a) Consideration of initial reports: six meetings;

(b) Consideration of periodic reports: twelve meetings;

(c) Adoption of concluding comments: four meetings;

(d) Opening of the session, adoption of the agenda, report by the Chairperson and closed meeting with entities of the United Nations system on reports before the session: one meeting;

(e) Informal meeting with NGOs: one meeting (in two segments);

(f) Adoption of the report of the session: one meeting.

5. The remaining three to five meetings per session are allocated for considering all other matters, including:

(a) Implementation of article 21 of the Convention, especially elaboration of general recommendations, suggestions and statements by the Committee (time allocated varies);

(b) Ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee, including working methods, and meetings with States parties on various issues (time allocated varies);

(c) Activities under the Optional Protocol (time allocated varies).

6. The present note has been prepared by the secretariat in response to a request made by the Committee at its twenty-ninth session. At that session, the Committee decided, as part of its ongoing efforts to enhance its working methods, and in particular to achieve timely consideration of reports of States parties, to consider the option of holding meetings in parallel working groups for the consideration of periodic reports submitted under article 18 of the Convention. In particular, the Committee asked the secretariat to review the implications, and possible modalities, of the consideration of reports of States parties in two parallel working groups, or chambers. The secretariat was requested to address questions such as the number of reports to be considered, composition of working groups, allocation of reports to working groups, implications with regard to the Committee's rules of procedure, tasks of country rapporteurs and of the pre-session working group, preparation and adoption of concluding comments and implications for secretariat support as well as financial implications.

II. Working groups or chambers

7. The present chapter reviews the implications and possible modalities of the consideration of reports of States parties in two parallel working groups, or chambers. It addresses questions such as implications with regard to the Committee's rules of procedure, the number of reports to be considered per session, the consideration of reports and adoption of concluding comments, the establishment and composition of parallel working groups/chambers, the allocation of reports to working groups/chambers, implications for the pre-session working group and country rapporteurs, implications for secretariat support, and financial implications.

A. Implications with regard to the Committee's rules of procedure

8. It appears that the Committee's rules of procedure are flexible enough to accommodate the work of the Committee in two parallel working groups. In particular, rule 41 on subsidiary bodies provides that "the Committee may set up ad hoc subsidiary bodies and will define their composition and mandates" (rule 41.1). It also states that "each subsidiary body shall elect its own officers and will, mutatis mutandis, apply the present rules" (rule 41.2). This would indicate that no change in the rules would be necessary. Rules such as those on the quorum (rule 29) would also apply, mutatis mutandis, to working groups. Each working group would elect its own officers, which could be those of the Committee, as outlined above. While rule 51 on the examination of reports refers to the Committee's consideration of reports, read in conjunction with rule 41, it would seem to fully accommodate consideration of reports in working groups. At the same time, as the Committee gains experience and develops its practice with new working methods, relevant amendments to the rules of procedure could be introduced. In the past, the Committee has regularly constituted two parallel working groups to consider items such as the implementation of article 21 of the Convention and ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee.

B. Number of reports to be considered per session

9. The Committee has already noted that only periodic reports could be considered in parallel working groups, while initial reports would continue to be considered by the Committee as a whole. The total number of reports to be considered at each session should be flexible, depending on the number of reports awaiting consideration, and on the type of report (initial or periodic) that is available for consideration. There should, however, be a clear increase over the number currently considered at each session, to a minimum of 10 and up to 14 reports, depending on the type of report available for consideration. For instance, the Committee could consider 4 initial reports and 6 periodic reports, or 2 initial reports and 10 periodic reports, or 14 periodic reports. Thus, a total of 20 to 28 reports could be considered by the Committee each year against the current average of 16 reports. The number of submitted periodic reports will increase further over time, while the number of submitted initial reports will decrease. This should be reflected in the flexible scheduling of reports selected for consideration at each session.

C. Consideration of reports and adoption of concluding comments

10. Initial reports would continue to be considered by the Committee as a whole during the first and third week of the session, while periodic reports would be considered in parallel working groups, mostly during the second week of the session.[1] Concluding comments on initial reports would continue to be prepared and adopted by the Committee as a whole, with no change to the current procedure. Concluding comments on periodic reports would be prepared by the working group that considered the report, while their final adoption would be the responsibility of the Committee as a whole. The current procedure for adopting concluding comments would continue to apply.

11. No change would be necessary in the method of preparation of draft concluding comments by country rapporteurs.

D. Composition of parallel working groups and allocation of reports

12. As the Committee comprises 23 experts, one working group would consist of 11, and the other working group of 12 members. Flexibility should be maintained in order to make adjustments for the possible absence of a member for an entire session. The quorum would be six and seven members, respectively (see also above). As the composition of the Committee in terms of geographical distribution usually changes, at least slightly, as a result of elections held every other year, an effort should be made as a matter of principle to achieve an approximate geographical balance in the composition of the two parallel working groups. An expert who is a national of a State party that is presenting its report should participate in the working group that does not consider the report of that State party. It may not be advisable to consider other factors for the composition of the working groups, such as those mentioned in article 17.1 (representation of the different forms of civilization as well as of the principal legal systems), or length of membership on the Committee so as to keep the decisions on the composition of the groups simple and flexible.

13. It may be best for the Bureau to propose, for a decision by the Committee at each session, the composition of the parallel working groups for the subsequent session, concurrently with the assignment of the reports to each working group (see next paragraph). This would suggest that the composition of the working groups would change with each session depending on the reports that will be taken up. While the composition of the working groups could be undertaken at random (for example by drawing lots), this would have the disadvantage of resulting in potentially geographically unbalanced groups, thus creating the need to make adjustments to ensure such balance and to ensure that country rapporteurs are in the group to which their reports are assigned, without disregarding the issue of the nationality of the experts.

14. The selection of the reports to be considered at a subsequent session should be made by the Committee, upon the recommendation of the Bureau, as is also currently the case. The decision on the allocation of reports to the respective working groups should also be made by the Committee, upon recommendation by the Bureau, at the session prior to the one at which the reports will be considered. While reports could be assigned at random, it may be advisable to decide on this issue in a deliberate manner so as to take into account factors such as the geographical diversity of reports and the composition of the working groups. The composition of the working groups and allocation of reports could be reflected in the annual report of the Committee.

15. The Committee elects a Bureau of five office-holders (a Chairperson, three vice-chairpersons and one rapporteur). An effort should be made to have a minimum of two and not more than three office-holders in each working group. In principle, members of the Bureau of the Committee could assume these functions also in the working groups. The Chairperson and one vice-chairperson respectively, could preside the two parallel working groups, and two vice-chairpersons, or one vice-

chairperson and the rapporteur, could take on the responsibilities as Rapporteurs for the working groups (see also para. 8 above).

E. Implications for the work of the pre-session working group and country rapporteurs

16. Preparation of lists of issues and questions for periodic reports would continue to be assigned to the Committee's pre-session working group. The pre-session working group should continue to consist of no more than five members of the Committee and should meet for no more than five days after the session preceding the one at which the periodic reports will be considered so as not to incur additional costs or place additional strain on members' schedules. Depending on the number of periodic reports that will be taken up (between 6 and 10), experts would be responsible for preparing lists of issues and questions for one or two reports, with additional support from the secretariat.

17. The Committee's efforts to achieve participation of country rapporteurs, to the extent possible, in the pre-session working group could not be fully implemented with the maintenance of a five-member pre-session working group that deals with up to 10 periodic reports. It would therefore become essential that country rapporteurs responsible for a specific report but not members of the pre-session working group submit lists of issues and questions to the pre-session working group. This would also reduce the workload on members of the pre-session working group.

F. Implications for secretariat support

18. The Division for the Advancement of Women is responsible for providing the Committee and its pre-session working group with technical and substantive servicing. While much of this work and in-session servicing, is assigned to the Women's Rights Unit, staff from other areas of the Division and from the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women routinely contribute to in-session servicing, especially in the preparation of summaries of the introduction by the State party and in extending support to experts in the preparation of concluding comments. Providing effective support for the Committee and its pre-session working group when it considers a significantly larger number of reports of States parties and devotes more time to its other responsibilities under the Convention and the Optional Protocol would place a significant strain on the resources of the Division, and especially on the staff of the Women's Rights Unit. One step to reduce that burden would be for the Committee to discontinue the inclusion of a summary of the States parties' introductions in its report. This could, for example, be compensated for by routinely placing introductory statements on the web site of the Division in the language in which they are made available electronically. Providing effective support for country rapporteurs would require information for the preparation of lists of issues and questions to be compiled and submitted to country rapporteurs well in advance of the meeting of the pre-session working group so as to ensure timely input to that group (see para. 16 above).

G. Financial implications

19. It is anticipated that additional resources will be necessary to provide required conference services (especially interpretation for both parallel working groups) and to cover the increase in pre-session and in-session documentation for the Committee and its pre-session working group.

Notes

[1] See the annex for a tentative schedule of a regular session of the Committee organized in two working groups/chambers.

Annex

Tentative schedule for a session of the Committee[a]

Week 1	*Week 2*	*Week 3*
Day 1:	**Day 1**:	**Days 1-2**:
Opening of the session Adoption of agenda Report of Chairperson on activities undertaken between sessions Implementation of article 21 of the Convention Ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee Informal meeting with United Nations bodies and specialized agencies Informal meeting with NGOs Working Group of the Whole	Working Group of the Whole, presentations by NGOs Activities under the Optional Protocol	Ways and means, and implementation of article 21, implementation of Optional Protocol
Days 2-3:	**Days 2-4**:	**Day 3**:
Committee of the Whole (plenary) to consider two initial reports	Working group A: consideration of three periodic reports Working group B: consideration of three periodic reports	Working groups A and B: preparation of concluding comments

[a] The present schedule has been prepared on the basis of the Committee's consideration of 2 initial reports and 10 periodic reports. Modifications will be made in the cases in which the Committee considers 4 initial reports and 6 periodic reports or 14 periodic reports.

Week 1	*Week 2*	*Week 3*
		Day 4: Committee of the Whole: preparation and adoption of concluding comments on initial reports Adoption of concluding comments on periodic reports
Days 4-5: Working group A: consideration of two periodic reports Working group B: consideration of two periodic reports	**Day 5**: Committee of the Whole: replies on two initial reports	**Day 5**: Committee of the Whole/Working Group of the Whole: action on all pending/outstanding matters Provisional agenda for the next session of the Committee Adoption of the report of the Committee